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(54) A POLYMER COMPOSITION INCLUDING DESTRUCTURED STARCH AND AN ETHYLENE COPOLYMER

POLYMERZUSAMMENSETZUNG, DIE DESTRUKTURIERTE STÄRKE UND EIN ETHYLENCOPOLYMER ENTHÄLT

COMPOSITION POLYMÈRE CONTENANT DE L'AMIDON DESTRUCTURE ET UN COPOLYMÈRE ETHYLENIQUE

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- CHEMICAL ABSTRACTS, Volume 92, No. 10, 10 March 1980, (Columbus, Ohio, US) C.C. LIN et al.: "Studies on Multicomponent Polymers. VI. PE/Starch/Calcium Carbonate Polyblends" see page 27, Abstract No. 77309q & Kuo Li T'ai-wan Ta Hsueh Kung Ch'eng Hsueh K'an, 1979, 25, 113-18

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EP 0 437 589 B1

Description

The present invention relates to polymer compositions including starch and an ethylene copolymer useful for the production of articles of biodegradable plastics material and to a method for their preparation.

5 Compositions which can be formed into films and which are constituted by starch and an ethylene copolymer, particularly an ethylene-acrylic acid copolymer (EAA) are described in Patent No. US-A-4,133,784. These compositions are transformed into flexible, water-resistant, heat sealable and biodegradable films by casting, simple extrusion or milling techniques. These processes are, however, slow and very expensive and, moreover, with certain starch contents necessary to achieve the desired mechanical properties, the degree of biodegradability and UV stability of the products 10 are greatly compromised.

It has been proposed in Patent No. US-A-4,337,81 that a sufficient quantity of neutralising agent, such as ammonia or an amine, should be added to the starch-EAA copolymer composition to neutralise some or all of the acid groups in the EAA, and that the formulation thus obtained, with a moisture content between 2 and 10% should then be blow-moulded.

15 It has also been proposed in Ind. Eng. Chem. Res. 1987, 26, pp. 1659-1663 that urea and/or polyols should be added to the starch-EAA copolymer compositions in order to facilitate the preparation and improve the resulting films from a cost and qualitative point of view. The effect of the presence of urea is to enable the crystalline structure of the starch to be destroyed by small quantities of water and hence to enable granules for filming to be produced directly 20 from a composition with a water content of around 16% and also to avoid the need to premix the starch-EAA copolymer mixture with large quantities of water in a very complex mixer before the extrusion process.

25 Unpublished Italian patent application No. 67413-A/89 and the corresponding EP 90110070.1 describe compositions which can be formed into films with good mechanical properties and into moulded articles and which include a destructured starch and an ethylene-vinyl alcohol copolymer. In this case, the compositions are preferably produced by the mixing, in a heated extruder, of the ethylene-vinyl alcohol copolymer with a starch component constituted by a destructured starch compositions produced beforehand by the mixing of starch in an extruder with a high-boiling plasticizer and a destructuring agent such as, for example, urea.

The compositions thus obtained are suitable both for filming by extrusion and blowing and for the production of moulded articles.

30 Within the scope of the research carried out by the Applicant in relation to the production of biodegradable polymer compositions based on destructured starch, other ethylene copolymers have been identified as being compatible with the starch, thus making available new polymer compositions useful both for the formation of films and for the production of moulded articles.

35 The subject of the invention is constituted by a polymer composition including destructured starch and a copolymer selected from the group consisting of ethylene-vinyl acetate having a vinyl acetate molar content of from 5 to 90%, ethylene-vinyl acetate having from 5 to 90% of hydrolyzed acetate groups, ethylene-glycidyl acrylate, ethylene-methyl methacrylate, ethylene-maleic anhydride, and mixtures thereof.

40 Of these polymers, the above defined ethylene-vinyl acetate copolymer is preferred particularly for the production of compositions for films and particularly preferred are ethylene-vinyl acetate copolymers having a vinyl acetate molar content of from 12 to 80%. Copolymers of ethylene-vinyl acetate are available commercially. For example, the ELVAX (registered trade mark) -copolymer can conveniently be used.

45 The other ethylene copolymers mentioned above, which, as a result of the tests carried out by the Applicant, have been found to be compatible with starch and therefore able to form starch and copolymer composites, may be considered in dependence on the specific properties desired for the biodegradable articles to be produced.

The term "starch" as used in the present description and in the claims covers in general all the starches of natural 50 or vegetable origin composed essentially of amylose and amylopectin. They can be extracted from various plants, such as, for example, potatoes, rice, tapioca, maize and cereals such as rye, oats and wheat. Maize starch is preferred. The term "starch" also covers modified starches whose acidity index has been reduced to between 3 and 6, as well as potato starch in which the type and concentration of the cations associated with the phosphate group have been modified. Starch ethoxylates, starch acetates, cationic starches, oxidised starches, cross-linked starches and the like may be used in the preparation of the compositions according to the invention.

In the composition according to the invention, destructured starch and the ethylene copolymer are present in a ratio of from 1:9 to 9:1, preferably from 1:4 to 4:1.

55 The ethylene copolymers mentioned above may be used in mixtures with each other or, to advantage, may be mixed with an ethylene-acrylic acid (EAA) copolymer whose use in biodegradable starch compositions is described in Patent No. US-A-4,133,784, or with an ethylene-vinyl alcohol copolymer (EVOH) as described in as yet unpublished EP 90110070.1.

The EAA copolymer, which may be present in the composition at concentrations of up to 25% by weight, is a water-dispersible copolymer produced by the copolymerisation of a mixture comprising from 3 to 30%, preferably 20%, by

weight of acrylic acid and correspondingly from 97 to 70%, preferably 80%, by weight of ethylene. Polyvinyl alcohol may also be used as the polymeric additive to the composition.

The preferred ethylene-vinyl alcohol copolymer has an ethylene content of from 10 to 90% by weight, preferably from 10 to 40% by weight (15-50% mol), more preferably 30-45% mol, with a melt flow index (210°C, 2.16 Kg) of between 2 and 50, preferably between 6 and 20.

Further preferred features for the EVOH copolymer are as follows:

10	Intrinsic viscosity, $[\eta]$ (in DMSO at 30°C)	0.50-0.9 preferably 0.65-0.80
15	Molecular weight distribution Mw/Mn (GPC in tetrahydrofuran)	1.3-4
	Melting point temperature	< 180°C
	Hydrolysis degree*	preferably 160-170°C 90-99.9%

* Basis hydrolysis and titration of the residual base with acid.

The EVOH copolymer is preferably used at a concentration up to 40% wt with respect to the weight of the composition.

Particularly when it is desired to improve the toughness and elongation (breaking strain) properties, a preferred embodiment of the invention contemplates the use of a composition wherein the synthetic polymer portion consists of or comprises a blend of the above defined EVOH and EVA copolymers. It has been found that the addition of EVA to blends based on starch and EVOH provides for a reduction of the Young's modulus and for a significant increase of the breaking strain and toughness properties of the material. However when the vinyl acetate content is below a value of about 15% wt or 5% mol, the compatibility between the components becomes too low and homogenous film cannot be obtained. On the other hand the nature of the starch does not seem to significantly influence the properties of the material.

In this embodiment the weight ratio between EVOH and EVA copolymers is preferably in the range of from 8:1 to 2:1.

The EVA copolymer in the composition according to the invention, is generally used at a concentration of from 3-40% wt, preferably 3-20% wt with respect to the weight of the composition.

The modified EVAs having hydrolysed acetate groups, which may be defined as ethylene-vinyl acetate-vinyl alcohol terpolymers, when used in a blend of EVOH, EVA and starch provide for an increased compatibility of the components so that a higher modulus and a higher breaking strain are obtained.

Cross-linking agents, such as formaldehyde, paraformaldehyde, paraldehyde and epichlorohydrin may also be present. Additives for imparting specific properties to the articles for which the composition is intended may also be introduced into the composition. These additives include UV stabilizers, flame-proofing agents, fungicides, herbicide, antioxidants, fertilisers, opacifying agents, stabilisers, plasticizers, antiblocking agents, and lubricants.

The method of preparing the compositions according to the invention is carried out in an extruder at a temperature of between 80 and 180°C, under conditions such as to destructure the starch, as defined in claims 13-19.

When the ethylene copolymer is EVA or a blend of EVA and EAA the temperature within the extruder is in the range of 80-140°C, preferably 90-120°C.

In order to encourage the destructure of the starch, urea may to advantage be added to the composition in quantities of up to 20% by weight of the weight of the starch component. Other destructure agents include alkali metal of alkaline earth metal hydroxides. Ammonia may be added to the composition supplied to the extruder and its concentration is reduced to below 0.2% by weight as a result of the extrusion.

A high-boiling plasticizer, such as polyethylene glycol, ethylene glycol, propylene glycol, sorbitol and preferably glycerine, may also be added to the composition in a quantity of from 0.05 to 100% by weight of the weight of the starch, preferably from 20 to 60% by weight.

The process of destructure the starch in the extruder is carried with the addition of water the concentration of which may reach values of up to 20% by weight, preferably up to 15%, of the total weight of the composition supplied. This value includes the intrinsic bound water content of the starch used and any water added as required. The water content is at any rate reduced to values below 6%, preferably below 4% by weight by degassing at the output of the extruder or in an intermediate degassing stage interposed between a mixing stage and a transportation and compression stage, as described in Italian Patent Application No. 67666-A/89 in the name of the Applicant, or even by the drying of the granulate at 70°C for 8 hours after the extrusion.

If a mixture of ethylene copolymers and, in particular, a mixture of ethylene-vinyl acetate and ethylene acrylic acid is used, a blend is preferably produced beforehand by the mixing of the copolymers in an extruder and the pelletising of the extrusion. In a second stage, the pellets are then mixed with starch with the addition of water and any of the

EP 0 437 589 B1

destructuring and plasticizing agents mentioned above, in a heated extruder under conditions such as to destructure the starch.

Further methods for preparing the polymer compositions which are the subject of the invention are described in Italian Patent Application No. 67413-A/89 in the name of the Applicant.

5 Further advantages and characteristics of the invention will become clear from the following examples, provided purely by way of illustration where all concentrations are in % wt, unless otherwise indicated.

Example 1

10 A HAAKE REOMEX Model 252 extruder with an L/D ratio of 19, a screw diameter of 19 mm and a compression ratio of 1:3 was supplied with a composition constituted by:

38.5% of the ethylene-vinyl acetate copolymer ELVAX 260 (registered trademark, 28% wt vinyl acetate (11.2% mol)
38.5% of the Dow Chemical copolymer EAA 5981 containing 20% of acrylic acid,
15 11.5% of urea,
3.8% of ammonia,
and 7.7% of water.

20 The extrusion temperature was approximately 100°C and the speed of the screw approximately 60 rpm. 50 parts of the product thus obtained were mixed with 50 parts of the starch GLOBE 03401 Cerestar (registered trademark) and 10 parts of water, and the mixture was extruded with the same extruder at a temperature of between 90 and 110°C. The extrusion thus obtained was formed into pellets with a water content of 4% and the pellets were supplied to the same extruder with the use of a film-blown head, at a temperature of 100°C and a screw rotation rate of 40 rpm. Rectangular test pieces for tensile testing according to ASTM 882 were formed from the films which were approximately 25 100 microns thick.

The test pieces were conditioned at 23 ± 1°C and at 55 ± 5% relative humidity for 24 hours. The mechanical strength tests gave the following results expressed as average values:

30	Young's modulus	91 MPa
	breaking strain	93.8%
	breaking stress	14.8 MPa

Example 2

35 The extruder described in Example 1 was supplied with a composition comprising:

76% of copolymer ELVAX - 260
14% of urea
40 10% of water

and was operated under the same conditions as described in Example 1.

50 parts of the product thus obtained were mixed in an extruder at 90°C and a screw rotation rate of 40 rpm with 50 parts of the starch GLOBE 03401 Cerestar (registered trademark) and 7 parts of water.

45 Test pieces of the film were made as described in Example 1 and when subjected to mechanical strength tests gave the following values:

50	Young's modulus	90 MPa
	breaking strain	120%
	breaking stress	7 MPa

Examples 3-22

55 In all the following examples, the components were pre-mixed and then fed from a Licoarbo DC10 batcher to a Haake Reomex extruder, model 252, with L/D ratio of 19, screw diameter of 19 mm, and a compression ratio of 1:3, with the screw revolving at 45 rpm.

The temperature profile in the extruder was as follows:

EP 0 437 589 B1

- feeding zone 30°C
- first zone 90°C
- second zone variable as shown in Table 1 hereinafter
- third zone 130°C
- 5 - fourth zone 100°C.

The extruded material was formed into pellets, was compression moulded in a heated press at temperatures of from 110 and 140°C, to obtain films having the thickness of about 300 microns which, after having been conditioned at 23°C and 55% relative humidity, were subjected to tensile testing according to ASTM 882.

10

TABLE 1

Temperature of the second zone of the extruder		
	Example	°C
15	3-6	170
	7	140
	8	180
	9	170
20	10-14	140
	15-22	170

In the example the following materials were used:

- 25 Starch Globe 03401 produced by Cerestar
- Starch-A Snowflake 3183 - Cerestar
- Starch-B Pea starch with 96% wt amylose - Cerestar (not available on the market)
- Starch-C Amisol 05582 (oxidized) - Cerestar
- Starch-D Amisol Q TAC 0596 (cationic starch) - Cerestar
- 30 EVOH-1 Ethylene-vinyl alcohol copolymer R-20, 40% mol ethylene - Solvay
- EVOH-2 Ethylene-vinyl alcohol copolymer obtain-by hydrolysis of Riblene JV 1055, pruduced by Enichem (28% wt vinyl acetate, 1.2% mol)
- EVOH-3 Ethylene-vinyl alcohol copolymer "L-6" 29% mol ethylene - Solvay
- EAA-20 Ethylene-acrylic acid copolymer, 20% wt (8.8% mol) acrylic acid - Du Pont
- 35 EAA-9 Ethylene-acrylic acid copolymer 9% wt (3.7% mol) acrylic acid - Du Pont
- EVA-1 Elvax 260 (28% wt (11.2% mol) vinyl acetate) - Du Pont
- EVA-2 Elvax 550, 15% wt (5.3% mol) vinyl acetate - Du Pont
- Modified EVAExperimental product obtained by partial hydrolysis of EVA having 20% molar content of ethylene, hydrolysis value of the final product 270
- 40 Plasticizer Glycerine containing 15% of a 30% wt water solution of urea or 15% wt of a 30% water solution of ammonia

The compositions shown in Tables 2-5 were prepared.

TABLE 2

Compositions containing starch-EVOH-EVA (% wt)							
Example	Starch	EVOH-1	EVOH-2	EVOH-3	EVA-1	EVA-2	Plast.
45	3	40	40	-	-	-	20
	4	40	35	-	-	5	20
	5	40	30	-	-	10	20
	6	40	25	-	-	15	20
	7	40	-	30	-	10	20
	8	40	-	-	30	10	20
	9	40	30	-	-	-	10
50							20
55							

EP 0 437 589 B1

TABLE 3

Compositions based on starch-EAA-EVA (wt %)						
Example	Starch	EAA-9	EAA-20	EVA-1	EVA-2	Plast.
10	40	-	5	35	-	20
11	40	-	10	30	-	20
12	40	-	15	25	-	20
13	40	10	-	30	-	20
14	40	-	10	-	30	20

TABLE 4

Compositions based on modified starch-EVOH-EVA (% wt)							
Example	Starch-A	Starch-B	Starch-C	Starch-D	EVOH-1	EVA-1	Plast.
15	40	-	-	-	30	10	20
16	-	40	-	-	30	10	20
17	-	-	40	-	30	10	20
18	-	-	-	40	30	10	20

TABLE 5

Compositions based on starch-EVOH-EVA-modified EVA (% wt)					
Example	Starch	EVOH-1	EVA	EVA mod.	Plast.
19	40	35	-	5	20
20	40	25	-	15	20
21	40	30	5	5	20
22	40	25	10	5	20

The mechanical properties of the blends are shown in the following Table 6.

TABLE 6

Mechanical properties of the blends				
Example No.	Breaking stress MPa	Breaking strain %	Modules MPa	Notes
3	10	90	250	a
4	7	200	60	a
5	6	260	45	a
6	5	350	30	a
7	nd	nd	nd	a
8	10	120	130	a
9	nd	nd	nd	a,d
10	1.8	330	5	b
11	1.9	300	8	b
12	1.5	160	9	b
13	nd	nd	nd	b,c
14	nd	nd	nd	b,c

a = urea in the plasticizer

b = ammonia in the plasticizer

c = unblended phases

nd= not determined

d = non uniform film

TABLE 6 (continued)

Mechanical properties of the blends				
Example No.	Breaking stress MPa	Breaking strain %	Modules MPa	Notes
5	15	8	210	65
	16	10	110	80
	17	7	190	40
	18	8	90	35
10	19	8	130	190
	20	7	175	170
	21	7	180	185
	22	6	245	130

a = urea in the plasticizer

15

The films produced from the composition according to the invention are suitable for the production of packaging and mulching materials and also have satisfactory shear- and puncture-strength characteristics. The films are flexible, heat sealable and water-resistant.

20

Claims

1. A polymer composition useful for the production of articles of biodegradable plastics material, including destructured starch produced by heating a starch having a water content up to 20% by weight of the composition supplied in an extruder at a temperature of between 80° and 180°C and a copolymer, in a starch/copolymer weight ratio of from 1:9 to 9:1, selected from the group consisting of ethylene-vinyl acetate having a vinyl acetate molar content of from 12 to 90%, ethylene-vinyl acetate having from 5 to 90% of hydrolysed acetate groups, ethylene-glycidil acrylate, ethylene-methyl methacrylate, ethylene-maleic anhydride and mixtures thereof.
2. A composition according to Claim 1, in which the ethylene copolymer and the starch are in a weight ratio of from 1:4 to 4:1.
3. A composition according to Claim 1, wherein the ethylene-vinyl acetate copolymer has a vinyl acetate molar content of from 12 to 80%.
4. A composition according to Claim 1, further including up to 25% by weight of ethylene-acrylic acid copolymer with respect to the total weight of the composition.
5. A composition according to Claim 1, further including up to 40% wt of an ethylene-vinyl alcohol copolymer with respect to the total weight of the composition.
6. A composition according to Claim 5, wherein the copolymer portion consists of ethylene-vinyl alcohol and ethylene-vinyl acetate in a weight ratio of from 2:1 to 8:1.
7. A composition according to Claim 5, wherein the copolymer portion consists of ethylene-vinyl alcohol, ethylene-vinyl acetate and modified ethylene-vinyl acetate.
8. A composition according to Claim 1, further including a high-boiling plasticizer at a concentration of from 20 to 60% by weight of the weight of the starch component.
9. A composition according to Claim 8, wherein the high-boiling plasticizer is selected from a group consisting of glycerine, polyethylene glycol, ethylene glycol, propylene glycol, sorbitol and mixtures thereof.
10. A composition according to Claim 1, further including up to 20% by weight of urea with respect to the weight of the starch component.
11. A composition according to Claim 1, including water at a concentration of up to 6%, preferably no greater than 4%

by weight of the total weight of the composition.

12. A composition according to Claim 1, in which the ethylene copolymer is ethylene-vinyl acetate and includes up to 25% of an ethylene-acrylic acid copolymer with respect to the total weight of the composition.

5

13. Articles in the form of films and moulded articles constituted by a composition according to any of Claims 1 to 12.

10

14. A method for the preparation of a polymer composition useful for the production of articles of biodegradable plastics material, comprising the steps of:

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- mixing a composition including starch, a copolymer selected from the group consisting of ethylene-vinyl acetate, having a vinyl acetate molar content of from 5 to 90%, modified ethylene-vinyl acetate having from 5 to 90% of hydrolysed acetate groups, ethylene-glycidil acrylate, ethylene-methyl methacrylate, ethylene-maleic anhydride and mixtures thereof, water and possibly urea and/or ammonia in an extruder heated to a temperature of between 80 and 180°C, and
- bringing the water content to below 6% by weight, preferably to below 4% by weight, and any ammonia content to below 0.2% by weight.

15

20

15. A method according to Claim 14, in which the composition supplied to the extruder includes a quantity of water of up to 20%, preferably up to 15% by weight of the total weight of the composition.

16. A method according to Claim 14, wherein the composition fed to the extruder further includes up to 40% wt of an ethylene-vinyl alcohol copolymer with respect to the total weight of the composition.

25

17. A method according to Claim 16, wherein the ethylene copolymer portion of the composition consists of ethylene-vinyl alcohol and ethylene-vinyl acetate in a weight ratio of from 2:1 to 8:1.

30

18. A method according to Claim 16, wherein the ethylene copolymer portion of the composition consists of ethylene-vinyl alcohol, ethylene-vinyl acetate and modified ethylene-vinyl acetate.

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19. A method according to Claim 14, wherein the ethylene copolymer and the starch in the composition are in a weight ratio of from 1:4 to 4:1.

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Patentansprüche

40

1. Polymermasse, geeignet zur Herstellung von Gegenständen aus bioabbaubarem Kunststoffmaterial, die destrukturierte Stärke, hergestellt durch Erhitzen einer Stärke, die einen Wassergehalt bis zu 20 Gewichtsprozent der Masse aufweist, durch Einspeisen in einen Extruder bei einer Temperatur zwischen 80° und 180°C und ein Copolymer, ausgewählt aus der Gruppe, bestehend aus Ethylen-Vinylacetat mit einem molaren Anteil an Vinylacetat von 12 bis 90%, Ethylen-Vinylacetat, das 5 bis 90% hydrolysierte Acetatgruppen aufweist, Ethylen-Glycidylacrylat, Ethylen-Methylmethacrylat, Ethylen-Maleinsäureanhydrid und Gemischen davon, bei einem Stärke/Copolymer-Gewichtsverhältnis von 1:9 bis 9:1 einschließt.

45

2. Masse nach Anspruch 1, wobei das Ethylen-Copolymer und die Stärke in einem Gewichtsverhältnis von 1:4 bis 4:1 vorliegen.

50

3. Masse nach Anspruch 1, wobei das Ethylen-Vinylacetat-Copolymer einen molaren Anteil an Vinylacetat von 12 bis 80% aufweist.

55

4. Masse nach Anspruch 1, die außerdem bis zu 25 Gewichtsprozent Ethylen-Acrysäure-Copolymer hinsichtlich des Gesamtgewichtes der Masse einschließt.

60

5. Masse nach Anspruch 1, die außerdem bis zu 40 Gewichtsprozent eines Ethylen-Vinylalkohol-Copolymers hinsichtlich des Gesamtgewichtes der Masse einschließt.

65

6. Masse nach Anspruch 5, wobei der Copolymeranteil aus Ethylen-Vinylalkohol und Ethylen-Vinylacetat in einem Gewichtsverhältnis von 2:1 bis 8:1 besteht.

7. Masse nach Anspruch 5, wobei der Copolymeranteil aus Ethylen-Vinylalkohol, Ethylen-Vinylacetat und modifiziertem Ethylen-Vinylacetat besteht.

5 8. Masse nach Anspruch 1, die außerdem einen hochsiedenden Weichmacher bei einer Konzentration von 20 bis 60 Gewichtsprozent des Gewichtes der Stärke-Komponente einschließt.

9. Masse nach Anspruch 8, wobei der hochsiedende Weichmacher aus der Gruppe, bestehend aus Glycerin, Polyethylenglycol, Ethylenglycol, Propylenglycol, Sorbit und Gemischen davon ausgewählt ist.

10 10. Masse nach Anspruch 1, die außerdem bis zu 20 Gewichtsprozent Harnstoff hinsichtlich des Gewichtes der Stärke-Komponente einschließt.

11. Masse nach Anspruch 1, die Wasser bei einer Konzentration von bis zu 6%, vorzugsweise nicht mehr als 4 Gewichtsprozent des Gesamtgewichtes der Masse einschließt.

15 12. Masse nach Anspruch 1, wobei das Ethylen-Copolymer Ethylen-Vinylacetat ist und bis zu 25% eines Ethylen-Acrysäure-Copolymers hinsichtlich des Gesamtgewichtes der Masse einschließt.

13. Gegenstände in Form von Folien und Formgegenständen, die aus einer Masse nach einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 20 12 bestehen.

14. Verfahren zur Herstellung einer Polymermasse, die zur Herstellung von Gegenständen aus bioabbaubarem Kunststoffmaterial geeignet ist, umfassend die Schritte:

25 - Vermischen einer Masse, die Stärke, ein Copolymer, ausgewählt aus der Gruppe, bestehend aus Ethylen-Vinylacetat, das einen molaren Anteil an Vinylacetat von 5 bis 90% aufweist, modifiziertem Ethylen-Vinylacetat, das 5 bis 90% hydrolysierte Acetatgruppen aufweist, Ethylen-Glycidylacrylat, Ethylen-Methylmethacrylat, Ethylen-Maleinsäureanhydrid und Gemischen davon, Wasser und gegebenenfalls Harnstoff und/ oder Ammoniak einschließt, in einem auf eine Temperatur zwischen 80 und 180°C erwärmten Extruder, und

30 - Einstellen des Wassergehalts unter 6 Gewichtsprozent, vorzugsweise unter 4 Gewichtsprozent und eines Ammoniakgehalts unterhalb 0,2 Gewichtsprozent.

15. Verfahren nach Anspruch 14, wobei die dem Extruder zugeführte Masse eine Wassermenge bis zu 20%, vorzugsweise bis zu 15 Gewichtsprozent des Gesamtgewichtes der Masse einschließt.

35 16. Verfahren nach Anspruch 14, wobei die dem Extruder zugeführte Masse außerdem bis zu 40 Gewichtsprozent eines Ethylen-Vinylalkohol-Copolymers, hinsichtlich des Gesamtgewichtes der Masse, einschließt.

17. Verfahren nach Anspruch 16, wobei der Ethylen-Copolymer-Anteil der Masse aus Ethylen-Vinylalkohol und Ethylen-Vinylacetat in einem Gewichtsverhältnis von 2:1 bis 8:1 besteht.

40 18. Verfahren nach Anspruch 16, wobei der Ethylen-Copolymer-Anteil der Masse aus Ethylen-Vinylalkohol, Ethylen-Vinylacetat und modifiziertem Ethylen-Vinylacetat besteht.

45 19. Verfahren nach Anspruch 14, wobei das Ethylen-Copolymer und die Stärke in der Masse in einem Gewichtsverhältnis von 1:4 bis 4:1 vorliegen.

50 **Revendications**

1. Une composition de polymère utilisable pour la fabrication d'articles en matière plastique biodégradables, comprenant de l'amidon déstructuré obtenu par chauffage d'un amidon présentant une teneur en eau pouvant atteindre 20 % en poids de la composition amenée dans une extrudeuse à une température comprise entre 80°C et 180°C et d'un copolymère employés, selon un rapport pondéral amidon/copolymère de 1/9 à 9/1, choisi dans le groupe consistant en éthylène-acétate de vinyle ayant une teneur molaire en acétate de vinyle de 12 à 90 %, éthylène-acétate de vinyle dont 5 à 90 % des groupes acétates sont hydrolysés, éthylène-acrylate de glycidyle, éthylène-méthacrylate de méthyle, éthylène-anhydride maléique, et leurs mélanges.

2. Une composition selon la revendication 1, dans laquelle le copolymère d'éthylène et l'amidon sont en un rapport pondéral de 1/4 à 4/1.
3. Une composition selon la revendication 1, dans laquelle le copolymère d'éthylène-acétate de vinyle présente une teneur molaire en acétate de vinyle de 12 à 80 %.
4. Une composition selon la revendication 1, comprenant en outre jusqu'à 25 % en poids de copolymère éthylène-acide acrylique par rapport au poids total de la composition.
5. Une composition selon la revendication 1, comprenant en plus jusqu'à 40 % en poids de copolymère éthylène-alcool vinylique par rapport au poids total de la composition.
6. Une composition selon la revendication 5, dans laquelle la partie de copolymère consiste en un copolymère formé d'éthylène-alcool vinylique et d'éthylène-acétate de vinyle selon un rapport pondéral de 2/1 à 8/1.
7. Une composition selon la revendication 5, dans laquelle la partie copolymère consiste en éthylène-alcool vinylique, éthylène-acétate de vinyle et éthylène acétate de vinyle modifié.
8. Une composition selon la revendication 1, comprenant en outre un plastifiant à haut point d'ébullition à une concentration de 20 % à 60 % en poids par rapport au poids du constituant amidon.
9. Une composition selon la revendication 1, dans laquelle le plastifiant à haut point d'ébullition est choisi dans le groupe consistant en glycérine, polyéthéneglycol, éthyléneglycol, propyléneglycol, sorbitol et leurs mélanges.
10. Une composition selon la revendication 1, comprenant en outre jusqu'à 20 % en poids d'urée par rapport au poids du constituant amidon.
11. Une composition selon la revendication 1, comprenant de l'eau à une concentration pouvant atteindre jusqu'à 6 %, de préférence non supérieure à 4 %, du poids total de la composition.
12. Une composition selon la revendication 1, dans laquelle le copolymère d'éthylène est un copolymère éthylène-acétate de vinyle et comprenant jusqu'à 25 % en poids de copolymère éthylène-acide acrylique par rapport au poids total de la composition.
13. Article sous forme de film et d'articles moulés constitué par une composition selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 12.
14. Un procédé de fabrication d'une composition de polymère utile pour la fabrication d'articles en matière plastique biodégradables comprenant les étapes de :
 - malaxage d'une composition comprenant de l'amidon, un copolymère choisi dans le groupe consistant en éthylène-acétate de vinyle, présentant une teneur molaire en acétate de vinyle de 5 à 90 %, un copolymère éthylène-acétate de vinyle modifié comportant 5 à 90 % de ces groupes acétate hydrolysé, éthylène-acrylate de glycidyle, éthylène-méthacrylate de méthyle, éthylène-anhydrique maléique, et leurs mélanges, de l'eau et, le cas échéant, de l'urée et/ou de l'ammoniac, dans une extrudeuse chauffée à une température comprise entre 80 et 180°C, et
 - ajustement de la teneur en eau en-dessous de 6 % en poids, de préférence en dessous de 4 % en poids, et de la teneur totale en ammoniac à une teneur inférieure à 0,2 % en poids.
15. Un procédé selon la revendication 14, dans lequel la composition amenée dans l'extrudeuse comprend une quantité d'eau pouvant atteindre 20 % en poids, de préférence 15 % en poids, par rapport au poids total de la composition.
16. Un procédé selon la revendication 14, dans lequel la composition amenée à l'extrudeuse comprend en outre jusqu'à 40 % en poids d'un copolymère éthylène-alcool vinylique par rapport au poids total de la composition.
17. Un procédé selon la revendication 16, dans lequel la partie copolymère d'éthylène de la composition consiste en éthylène-alcool vinylique et éthylène-acétate de vinyle selon un rapport pondéral de 2/1 à 8/1.

EP 0 437 589 B1

18. Un procédé selon la revendication 16, dans lequel la partie copolymère d'éthylène de la composition consiste en éthylène-alcool vinylique, éthylène-acétate de vinyle et éthylène-acétate de vinyle modifié.

5 19. Un procédé selon la revendication 14, dans lequel le copolymère d'éthylène et l'amidon dans la composition sont en un rapport pondéral de 1/4 à 4/1.

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